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DIALECT SOCIETY

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Yorkshire Dialect Society.

REPORT FOR 1906.

The Intermediate Meeting of the Society was held at Ilkley, May 19th, 1906, under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. A. Middlebrook, Chairman of the Ilkley District Council. The Paper was read by Mr. R. Stead, B.A., F.R.Hist.S., on "The Two Yorkshire Dialects: a Comparison and a Contrast."

The Annual Meeting was held on October 13th, 1906, in the Mansion House, York, by kind permission of the Lord Mayor, who took the Chair. The Paper was written by Mr. S. O. Addy, M.A., of Sheffield, on "The Collection of English Dialect."

Both these Papers are printed in the present volume of the Society's Transactions.

The usual business of the Society was transacted at the Annual Meeting. The Marquis of Ripon, K.G., was re-appointed President, the Vice-Presidents were re-elected, and also the Council, with the addition of Professor G. C. Moore-Smith, M.A., of the Sheffield University, and of Mr. G. Glover Alexander, M.A., of Barnsley.

The question of the establishment of one or more scholarships tenable at one of the Universities, for the study of Local Dialects, still remains in abeyance, but the Council trust that in spite of considerable difficulties a project of so much value will be achieved.

S. PHILIP UNWIN, *Chairman of Council.*

THOMAS CLARKE, *Hon. Secretary.*

BRADFORD, *January, 1907.*

THE TWO YORKSHIRE DIALECTS.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE YORKSHIRE DIALECT SOCIETY,
AT ILKLEY, ON MAY 19th, 1906,

BY

RICHARD STEAD, B.A., F.R.Hist.S.

When I received the invitation with which the Yorkshire Dialect Society honoured me, and announced the title of my paper to your respected Chairman of Council, he immediately replied, "Your title will provoke criticism at the very outset." My answer was, "I sincerely hope so." And when Mr. Unwin added, "There are far more than two dialects in Yorkshire," I agreed with him. To make a clean breast at once, I purposely chose a title that might be a little piquant, in order to bespeak, as it were, the interest of my hearers, and, it may be, to puzzle them somewhat. And, in truth, I am anxious to draw your attention to a department of dialect study that is apt to be too much overlooked; I mean the study of *pronunciation*.

As for criticism, I have been all my life used to it, and to plenty of it, as you will readily believe when I say that for between thirty and forty years I was a schoolmaster, and that hundreds, if not thousands, of omniscient and irrepressible schoolboys have picked holes in my coat.

Before we can determine how many different dialects there are within the limits of this or any other county, we must first enquire how, exactly, we distinguish one dialect from another—what it is, in fact, which makes any particular dialect to differ from its neighbours. Now three out of every four persons with whom I have spoken on this point are of opinion that it is the

words in use in a locality—that it is the *vocabularies* which make this prime distinction—that different districts use, on the whole different words for the same thing. Now far be it from me, in the face of the wonderful work done by your distinguished Vice-President, Professor Joseph Wright, in the compilation of his splendid Dialect Dictionary—far be it from me, I say, to speak lightly of vocabularies. But it is a fact that the use of a word in, or its absence from, a particular district tells us little or nothing of the special characteristics of the speech of that particular district. A word may turn up anywhere—in Kent, in Cornwall, or in Pembrokeshire—a word which we may perhaps have been accustomed all our lives to regard as a characteristic Yorkshire word.

But there is the *Grammar* to be thought of. Much more to the point is this, when we want to mark off one dialect from another. Grammatical peculiarities are usually very local, and confined to limited areas. They seldom give a big jump, as it were, to appear unexpectedly in a different corner of the country, as is so often the case with words. The Pocklington man's "I is," "thoo is," for instance, do not figure at Peterborough or Portsmouth; they are unknown even at Pudsey or Pogmoor. And the South-country "I be," "give it to I," "her told it to we," and so on, would cause roars of laughter in any of our Yorkshire districts, and that in spite of the fact that some of us Yorkshire folk say, "Shall us break us journey?" "He wer theear," and so forth.

Yet as a test for varieties in dialects there is something still more important than even grammatical peculiarities, viz., *Pronunciation*. This is, in short, *the* main thing for our purpose, I mean the marking-off of one dialect from another. No one who has devoted years to the close study of provincial dialects, more especially of the pronunciation in each case, can doubt the truth of what I have just said. Words are something, Grammar more, Pronunciation still more, for this purpose.

Now, of all those who have gone deeply into this question

of dialect pronunciation, few, if any, can claim to have done more than the late Dr. Alexander J. Ellis, twice or thrice President of the Philological Society. His work, in five bulky volumes or parts, published conjointly by the Philological, the Early English Text, and the Chaucer societies, is a wonderful production, and, like the great Dialect Dictionary itself, is worthy of being ranked with the very best achievements of even German scholarship. This work of Dr. Ellis, especially Part V., which treats of *dialect* pronunciation, has, I doubt not, been read by many of my hearers. Yet as I find that there are some, even among dialect students, who have not made acquaintance with it, I have ventured to bring before you a few gleanings from it that may be helpful with respect to the study of the varieties of Yorkshire folk-speech.

I may just add that one of the ablest and most zealous of Dr. Ellis's helpers was the late Mr. Thomas Hallam, of Manchester, whose ear was as delicate to distinguish fine shades of difference between sounds as his energy and enthusiasm for dialect investigation were pre-eminent. For years Mr. Hallam devoted his holidays to visiting, now one district, now another, mingling closely with the rustics and gaining their confidence, so as to get from them their real speech—their *mother tongue*—and then transferring to paper what he had gathered. It was my privilege to know both these gentlemen, and to correspond regularly with them for a good number of years. In Dr. Ellis's study I have spent not a few pleasant, if laborious hours, for he was a terrible worker.

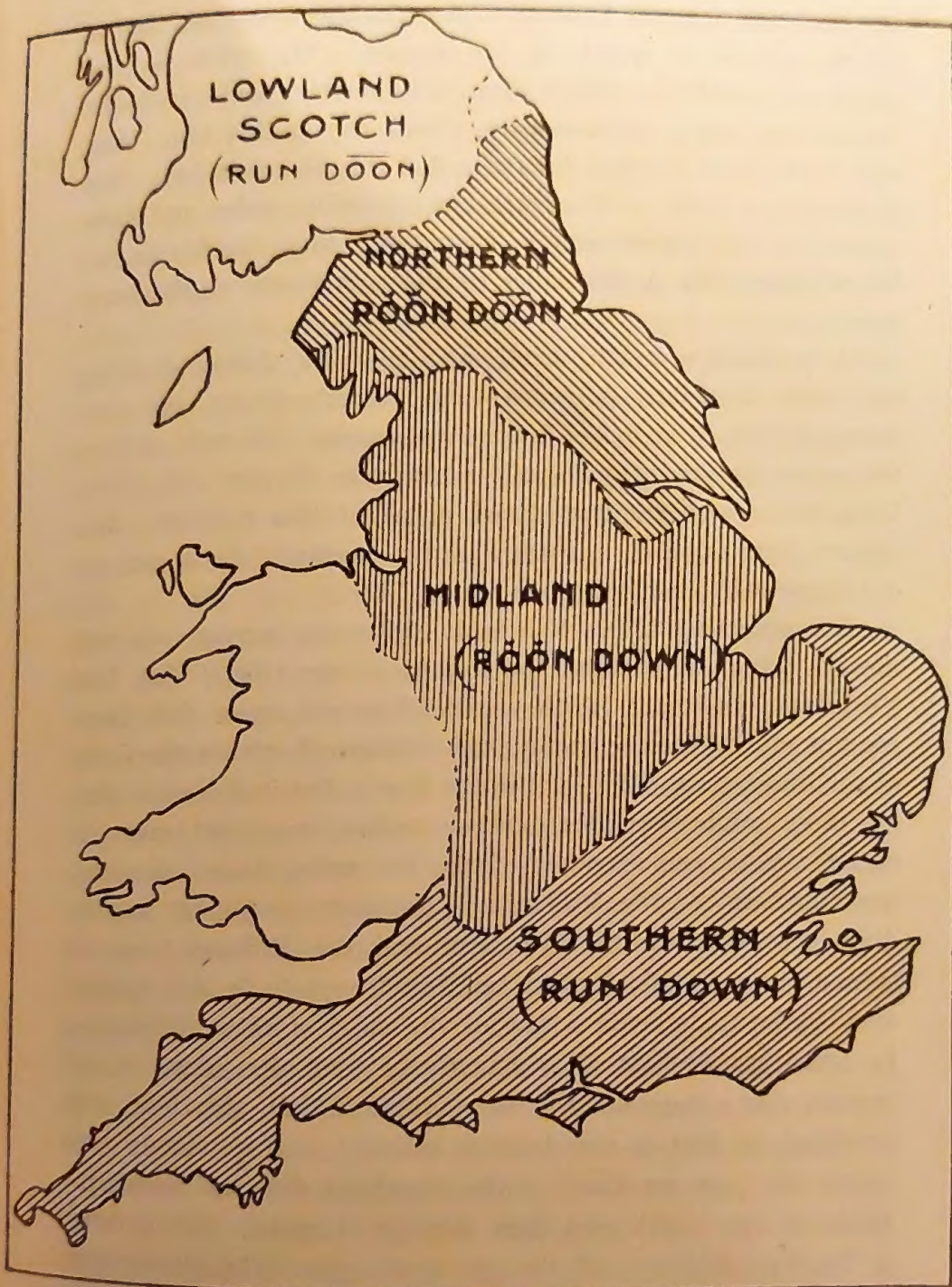
Now one of the main results of the labours of Dr. Ellis and his assistants was to establish the fact that all the many varieties of dialect in use in England may be classed under one or other of *four great divisions*. On the accompanying map these divisions are shown. Ellis names these grand dialect divisions respectively the Lowland-Scotch, Northern, Midland, and Southern. His test words for the different areas are "some house," but I have ventured to think the words

"run down" in some respects more suitable for the test purposes.

You will observe then how the first or Lowland-Scotch division has *run dōon*, the second or northern division *rōön dōon*, the Midland *rōön down*, and the Southern *run down*. And these are *infallible* tests. Whatever else in the way of dialectal peculiarities the rustic of any one of these grand divisions may have, that is, he will always give to these test words the values I have indicated for his particular division. And so will he deal, of course, with words analogous in sound.

It will at once be noted by Yorkshiremen that one of the great boundary lines between these main dialect divisions runs right across their own county, namely, the line separating the Northern from the Midland area. May I crave your attention for a moment to this particular line? You will observe that it begins at the head of the Humber, and slants in a general N.W. direction, till it passes out of the county of York, to continue to the coast of the Irish Sea. All above this line belongs to the Northern dialect division; all below it to the Midland division. I am, of course, here using Dr. Ellis's names. It is worth noting, in passing, that within the limits of the Northern division are included a small slice of Lincolnshire and a snippet of Nottinghamshire.

Naturally it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to fix this dividing line exactly. There must be—there is—a belt—a few miles in width, not more—of what we may call uncertain area, where the folk, that is, will be familiar with *both* varieties of dialect, and often use either indiscriminately. An actual instance that came under my own experience quite lately will illustrate what I mean. At a level crossing near Selby the signalman from his box shouted to his little boy, who had just come out of his cottage hard by, "Get back into t'hahse wi' tha; it's bahn ta raain." Then, as the boy did not seem in a hurry to obey, the man immediately followed with an impatient, "Gan into t'hoose, Ah tell tha; it's boon ta raain." Here



MAP SHOWING THE FOUR PRIME ENGLISH DIALECT DIVISIONS.

the man was using a Midland dialect in the first case, and a Northern form of speech in the second. The truth is, the signalman could use either form indifferently, and no doubt did so use them, unconsciously, every day of his life. And why? He lived in what I have called the *uncertain belt*. But at Riccall, a little to the north-east of Selby, *hahse* and *bahn* would be as impossible as *hoose* and *boon* would be at Ferrybridge, only a few miles to the south-west of the same town.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that Dr. Ellis's dividing line across Yorkshire is incorrect to a certain extent, the good doctor having been misled by his informants. He tells us that the *hoose* district extends as far south as Burley and Otley. Well, we are not far from those places at this moment. Can anyone here imagine a Burley native saying, "Let's get oot o' t'hoose a bit, and gan doon t'toon"?

But accepting Ellis's line as in the main correct, you will now, I think, understand the import of my title, "The Two Yorkshire Dialects." Such a title does *not* mean that there are not more than *two* varieties of folk-speech within the limits of the broad-acred shire—not in the least. But it *does* mean that all these minor varieties, however many, may and must be classed under one or other of the *two prime dialect divisions*, the Northern, or the Midland. How many and great are the differences between the Northern and the Midland forms of speech, it would take long to tell, but I hope to be able roughly and briefly to indicate a few of the chief of these differences. In truth, to deal at all exhaustively with the matter would require many papers. I must content myself, therefore, with touching on just a few leading points. Let us merely note before we pass on that to the Northern division belong the whole of the North and East Ridings, together with a fringe of the West Riding. All the rest of the great West Riding area, the vast industrial district of Yorkshire, belongs, from a dialect point of view, to the Midland division; the *North* Midland,

if you will, but still Midland. We shall see this more clearly later on, I trust.

Now properly and fully to appreciate the differences between these or any other two dialect systems requires a long and intimate acquaintance with *both*. It also requires what is far less common, a *delicate and discriminating ear*. Even zealous and industrious students of dialects are often without that important endowment, a delicate ear. Let me give an illustration in point. There is a small Northern or *hoose* area in a neighbouring county, and in it lives a gentleman who has compiled one of the very best of the Dialect Society's glossaries, and who has thereby rendered great service to the dialect student and the philologist. All the rest of this gentleman's county, and up to within a very short distance of his own residence, is unmistakably in the Midland or *hahse* division. Yet, as Dr. Ellis tells us, this very gentleman "did not seem to know"—I am quoting the Doctor's exact words—"did not seem to know that any other pronunciation than *hoose* was current in his county"; this, notwithstanding the fact that most people in that county "hardly believe that in any part of it *hoose* is now said." And, let me tell you, there are thousands of folk in our own West Riding who have no notion that anybody in Yorkshire says *hoose* or *toon*. Just in the same way, to the North or East Riding rustic, such pronunciations as *hahse* and *tahn* are the merest "nonsense and rubbish," to use the very expression of one of them with whom I have often talked on the subject.

Coming now specially to the Midland area. In its entirety, of course, this area stretches over a wide extent of country, from above Leeds and Bradford in the north, down almost to Gloucester and Witney (Oxfordshire) in the south. Our Yorkshire part of this great division belongs to the *North-Midland* section. And Dr. Ellis still more closely particularises its position by calling it the *Eastern North Midland*; this, to distinguish it from the South Lancashire portion, which he names

the *Western North-Midland*. Our Yorkshire portion of the Midland area, it will be noted, covers almost exactly the great industrial region of the West Riding, with its many large and important towns, as Dr. Ellis says, "a most diversified country; the western parts inhabited by a great manufacturing population, rejoicing in their dialect; the eastern parts populous but not manufacturing." This non-manufacturing portion includes, of course, the belt running generally from Tadcaster, along the Ouse, to near Doncaster, and extending westward for a few miles. Within this Eastern North Midland section there are quite a number of varieties of dialect to be found, naturally enough. Dr. Ellis makes the number of different varieties no less than nine. But it must be owned that sometimes the difference is not great between two adjoining dialects. Compare the Bradford speech, for instance, with that of Leeds on the one side, and that of Keighley on the other.

The Northern dialect area of Yorkshire, including all the rest of the county, with the possible, though, as I think, doubtful exception of a small portion of the N.W. corner of it, comes under the East Northern dialect section. As in the case of the Eastern North Midland part of the county, this has its many varieties also. Dr. Ellis has been led to enumerate as many as eleven of these varieties, but the number is certainly too great. The Doctor himself says that it "is very difficult, if not impossible, to say with even moderate certainty what are the characteristics of each, and to discover any but a geographical test to distinguish them."

Here we are, then, face to face with an array of 20 dialectal varieties in the single county of Yorkshire, eleven in the Northern, and nine in the Midland division. Well may your good Chairman say, "There are far more than two dialects in Yorkshire" !

But if it is difficult to distinguish sometimes between two petty varieties in the same dialectal area—and it is often very difficult, as Dr. Ellis says—it is quite otherwise when we come

to deal with the main or great dialect divisions themselves. The difference in actual spoken result between the speech of the North or East Riding rustic and that of his West Riding cousin, for instance, is enormous, a state of things little realised by many, as I have before hinted. But I have again and again, in my own experience, proved the truth of the statement. It is almost impossible for the East Riding labourer to follow clearly and readily the talk of an ordinary West Riding rustic. I have often amused myself by firing off at an East Riding farm hand such a phrase as, "Awm bahn dahn t' tahn," and it is quite laughable to see the wonderment, if not the blank puzzlement, depicted on the man's face. It was truly a foreign tongue to him. Yet this same East Riding man has very little difficulty in following the talk of a Westmoreland or a Cumberland native. Possibly the West Riding farm hand might manage better to piece out the sense in the speech of an East Ridinger, but it is quite certain he would feel vastly more at home with a Nottinghamshire or a Derbyshire rustic, or even with one from Worcestershire. The explanation is simple, the East Ridinger and the Westmoreland native both speak a *Northern* dialect, while the West Riding man and the Worcestershire man both use a *Midland* form of speech. In short, the East (or North) Riding man does *not* belong to the West Riding man's main dialect division of England; the Worcestershire man *does*.

There is a story—I don't vouch for the truth of it—that once upon a time a young fellow from North-East Yorkshire travelled by a Bank Holiday trip to a certain West Riding town, to see his mother's cousin, whose acquaintance he had not yet made. The West Riding man welcomed his half-cousin with a cheery, "Awm varry glad thah's rōon ower ta see ma; hah's thy faayther?" The young man stared utterly puzzled at his relative. "What d' ya saay?" he enquired. "Saay? Ah saay, hah's thy faayther?" "Ah deean't undherstand sey k talk as that!" stammered the East Ridinger, turning

very red about the gills. "Thah fooil," retorted the other, also waxing wroth, "can't ta understand a bit o' plaain English? Ah'll saay it ageean for tha: hah's thy feyther? hah's thy feyther? That's plaain enif, isn't it?" "It's sadly ower plaain for me!" roared the young fellow, "tak that for thy lies an' impidence!" And giving the elder a hearty kick the lad rushed from the spot, muttering, "Ah'll teeach tha ta talk about mah mother i' that sooart o' waay!"

Now let us see in what chief respects the one great division of Yorkshire dialects differs from the other division—the Midland section from the Northern. So far as the *pronunciation* is concerned—and it will be borne in mind that it is with pronunciation I am mainly dealing to-day—the leading points of difference are two:—

(1) The treatment of the *ou* or *ow* sounds. We have already noted the characteristic values given to these in the two divisions respectively; the *hahse*, *tahn* (with the modified forms *haes*, *taen*, for the Halifax-Huddersfield districts), as compared with the *house*, *toon*, of the North and East Ridings.

(2) The *ey* sound given to the long *i* before certain letters, in the Northern dialect area, whereas in the Midland area we have pretty much the ordinary English values, with, of course, a broader turn. In other words the N. and E. Riding folk have *teit*, *peyp*, *leece*, *feyr*, and so on, where the W. Riding has *laif*, *laip*, *laee*, *lar* (a here = ah). It is only before the letters *c*, *f*, *k*, *p*, *t*, *r*, that this modification, *ey* for *i*, is used in the Northern area. Before vowels, and the letters *b*, *d*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *v*, *z* (*s* with *r* sound) we get as in the West Riding the broad *i* sound—*nam*, *laam*, *trarb*, *alaie*, *advertaise*, with a considerable tendency to make these still broader, *tahn*, *adveertaise*, &c.

This *ey* sound is so marked a characteristic of the speech of the north and east parts of our county that it is astounding any non-collector can be so grossly detecting it. Yet hear what Mr. Dale has to say on this very point. He is alluding to a well known Yorkshire proverb. (The glossarist) "cannot prevail

on himself to believe in these *ey* forms, but the testimony of so many observers is overwhelming in their favour." To which remark everybody acquainted with the North and East Riding speech will say, "I should think so!"

A third point of difference between the two Yorkshire dialects is the method of treatment dealt out to the letter *o*. In the broadest and oldest forms both divisions have *ooa* for the most part; both the West, and the North and East, say, for example, *rooad* (road), *sooak* (soak), *foaal* (foal), and so on. (I am not here taking account of peculiarities like the West Riding *hoil* for hole, or the North Riding *seeap* for soap, and so forth; these are exceptional forms.) But when the West Riding native begins to refine a little—when the wife or daughter of a self-made man, for instance, wishes to speak "better English"—she can and does get the ordinary rounded *o* of received English. But note the difference in the case of the other Ridings. The daughter of the well-to-do farmer there rarely indeed manages to get the *o* of good English at all; the almost invariable result of her efforts at refinement in speech is to make the *o* into *aw*, *lawd*, *awts*, *mawtor-car*, &c., for load, oats, motor-car, &c. In short, the East Riding and the North Riding rustic *cannot round an o*, the West Ridinger *can*.

In order to illustrate the characteristic and not a little remarkable differences between the Northern and the Midland forms of Yorkshire folk-speech, I have ventured to draw up a bit of dialogue. I will give first the West Riding or Midland version of it, and then, side by side with it, the rendering for the other two Ridings. I crave your kindly attention to these, and you will, I think, agree that the difference between the two forms is striking.

A man meets a neighbour just coming out of his house, and a conversation ensues.

W.R. OR MIDLAND.

Bill: "Bahn aht a bit,
Jack?"

N. AND E. RIDINGS.

Bill: "Boon oot a bit,
Jack?"

Jack: "Ah, lad; Awm abaht tired o' stoppin' i' t'hahse. Awm bahn for a run wi' t'bike."

Bill: "Onnybody i' t'hahse?"

Jack: "Ah; there's t'wife an wun or two o' t'young uns. Is ta comin' borra' ageean, like?"

Bill: "Ah, lad, Ah am. Ah want ta borra a gooid staht knife—reyt sharp, thah knaws. Awm bahn ta prune t'owd peeartree i' t'front o' t'hahse."

Jack: "Then thah's come ta t'reyt spot. Thah'll finnd what thah wants dahn t'gardin—i' t'greenhahse thear—stuck i' t'corner. Thah can keep it as long as thah wants. We's nooan want it for ahr wark yet a bit."

Bill: "Reyt thah art, lad."

Jack: "Ey, lad; Ah's about teyred o' stoppin' i' t'hoose. Ah's boon for a run wi' t'beyk."

Bill: "Onnybody i' t'hoose?"

Jack: "Ey; there's t'weyf an' yan or two o' t'young uns. Is ta comin' borra' ageean, leyk?"

Bill: "Ey, lad, I is. Ah want ta borra a good stoot kneyf—reyt sharp, thoo knaws. Ah's boon ta prune t'awd peeearthree i' t'front o' t'hoose."

Jack: "Then thoo's cum'd ta t'reyt spot. Thoo'll finnd what thoo wants doon t'gahdin—i' t'greenhoose there—stuck i' t'corner. Thoo can keep it as lang as thoo wants. We san't want it for oor wark yet a bit."

Bill: "Reyt thoo is, lad."

The first of these versions would be intelligible to every rustic in the south-western portions of Yorkshire, notwithstanding that the natives of some districts would modify it a little. And the second version would stand good for any of the north or east parts of the county. In the main, that is, for I do not deal here with minor variations. Each version is, as far as it goes, typical of its own area. That the rustic from the second mentioned area would have some difficulty in understanding thoroughly the first version, I can myself abundantly testify.

I have made similar experiments scores, if not literally hundreds, of times.

Now, in what consists this marked difference between the two forms? Well, leaving out certain little matters, it is due to the two things I have already cited, the pronunciation of the *ou*, *ow* sounds; and the *ei*, *ey* modification of the long *i* before the sharp mutes and the letter *r*, in the Northern area—the *hahse*, *baik*, of the one district, as against the *hoose*, *beyk*, of the other. I hope I have now made clear my position when I speak of the *two* Yorkshire dialects. Of minor varieties there are many—possibly a score; but they may all be classed under one or other of the two main divisions, the Northern, or the North Midland.

It is a coincidence worth noting, perhaps, that one of the German provincial dialects—that of most of the German-speaking parts of Switzerland—differs from ordinary German, among other things, in just the same two points as those I have brought before you to show the peculiarities of the East and North Riding speech. I mean that in Switzerland the peasants say *hus* (hoose), instead of the regular German *haus* (house), and so with other analogous words; and that they give to the long *i* (*ei*) the value of *ey*. I was struck, years ago, on my first visit to the city of Basle, when I heard the river there called, not the Rhine (Rhein), but *Rheyn* (as English *rain*), while the name of a small town not so far away was spoken of as *Rheynfelden*. Then, away in the mountains, a little fellow wanting a copper offered me his toboggan with a, “Wollen-Sie *reyten*?” (not *reiten*). At Berne I enquired of a man what the large building was near which we were. “*BundesHUS*,” he replied laconically, as he walked away. “So,” thought I to myself, “here I am in another *hoose* and *weyf* district!”

If we ask how it comes that the great industrial regions of Yorkshire are separated so markedly from the rest of the county, from a dialect point of view, and why the boundary line between the two dialects wanders in such an apparently aimless and

inconsequential fashion across the shire; and, further, if we enquire whether this division always obtained, the answers to the questions are not far to seek.

I need not remind any hearer, of course, that the various industries, more especially the textile industries—silk, woollen, linen—were introduced into Yorkshire from the Midlands. The Midland folk made their way into the county, bringing with them into the West Riding their industries. But they brought something more—their Midland speech. This Midland dialect was soon contending with the old Northern forms of speech, which were then in use in the West, as in the other Ridings, and had been in use for long generations before the coming of the Midlanders. The West Riding folk of the olden days were agriculturists, like their brethren of the rest of Yorkshire, and they spoke substantially the same dialect. Of this there cannot be a doubt; the mixed nature of the present-day West Riding folk-speech abundantly shows it.

Gradually the older, or Northern, speech was affected by the new Midland importation, and no wonder, for the industrial population began to outnumber by far the farming folk. And, we may well believe, the industrial class were, as a rule, quicker-witted, more vigorous, more apt to take the lead than the land-working and more rustic class. Thus many of the old Northern forms gradually disappeared from the West Riding, supplanted by the new-come Midland forms. In no long time the Midland predominated—gave the present undoubtedly Midland colour to the whole, as it were. And now the dialects of this great industrial district of Yorkshire are to be classed rather under the Midland than the Northern division.

History presents us, of course, with many cases of the kind, where the speech of the immigrants or new settlers in a region has ousted almost wholly, or to a great extent, the language of the original inhabitants of the district. The Roman conquerors of France, for instance, grafted their Latin forms of speech on the Gallic or German tongues they found there. The ancient

Cornish has been quite killed by the English of the immigrants from the bordering Saxon tribes. To come nearer home; we have an interesting instance of the same sort of thing going on under our own observation. I allude to the Middlesbrough district of our own county, where the speech of the people is being rapidly and markedly influenced and altered by that of the Newcastle and Durham colliers and iron-workers who have crowded into the neighbourhood. The pure Yorkshire of the older inhabitants of the Middlesbrough area, in fact, has been, and still is being, influenced and largely supplanted by the more northern—one may almost say, more Scotch—dialects of the new-comers.

But now, returning for a very few moments to the Midland or West Riding dialects of Yorkshire. Has the older or Northern speech been ousted from the industrial districts altogether? You will smile at such a question, and be disposed to reply, "Not a bit of it!" No, the old Northern speech has *not* been killed off in the West Riding; there is plenty of it left, and that in vigorous health. That it may long remain, "alive and kicking," I for one sincerely hope. If Dr. Ellis calls the present West Riding speech *Midland*, he does not forget to call it also *NORTH-Midland*, a title that implies much more than a mere statement of geographical position. The speech in question is, in short, *a mixture of Midland and Northern*, a fact known, I doubt not, to all my hearers, but not always known to the ordinary "man in the street."

If we ask, "What indications of the older folk-speech does this North-Midland dialect still show?" I answer, "They are far too numerous to be dealt with at the fag end of a humble paper like this. The subject would fill many papers. I must content myself with giving just one or two points."

There is a story worth quoting, perhaps. An old farmer from East Yorkshire, by doctor's orders, came to stay at one of the Ilkley hydros. He had not been here an hour before he wandered off into the fields, where he found another old fellow at



--- Boundary Line between Northern and Midland Ridings
..... Riding and County Boundaries.



work. The two men found each other's speech very strange, if not puzzling; the visitor from the East in particular being unable to understand much of what his Ilkley friend said. At last the Ilkley man, in telling some yarn or other, said, "Sooa Ah tewk t'ploo up o' my shoother, an'——." "Stop a bit!" interrupted the East Riding man eagerly, "d'ye saay *ploo* i' this country?" "'Ta be siwr we diw," the other replied, a trifle surprised by the question. "An' *shoother*?" "Shoother! Why, what else should we saay?" "Thenk goodness," cried the East Riding man delighted, "Ah finnd you deea speek a bit of English i' this country efther all!"

Now what does this story show? It shows that though the West Riding farm man may say *hahse* and *tahn*, he still keeps the *ploo* and *shoother* of his far-back ancestors. His daily work in the fields has been enough to preserve for him his ancient *ploo*, in the face of all temptations to adopt the more modern Midland form.

And every time the West Riding man says *neet*, *breet*, *leet*, and the like, he is using the old Northern tongue. Even the words *reyt* (or *reet*), and *feyt*, almost universally heard in the West Riding, are but relics of the old-time speech that prevailed in this, as in the other Ridings. *Reyt* and *feyt* are, in fact, just on a par with the *leyf*, *weyf*, *beyk*, and so on, of the North and East Ridings.

It would be easy to multiply instances to almost any extent, but my humble purpose has been attained. I wished merely to show that though the Midland speech has captured a large slice of the south-western portion of the county—and that the most populous, wealthy, and important portion—yet it has had to share the ground with the old Northern speech it found in possession at the time of its arrival.

Yes; there are *two Yorkshire dialects*: one, the ancient Northern in its purer form; the other, a vigorous Midland graft upon that same old Northern stock. *Floucant ambac!*

THE COLLECTION OF ENGLISH DIALECT

BY

S. O. ADDY, M.A., OF SHEFFIELD.

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The collection and preservation of dialect and folklore should, in these days, be the first care of the antiquary or philologist. Old charters, books, and various tangible relics of bygone times are not in much danger of perishing. It is otherwise with the remains of language, customs, and beliefs. But in making such collections time is against us. Whenever you put questions to country people about their dialect, or, as I should prefer to call it, their old words, you will be told that you should have come sooner. "If you had talked to my grandfather," you will hear a man say, "he could have told you something." Undoubtedly it is the fact that such influences as rapid locomotion and the more general habit of reading have effaced many old words which might otherwise have been living a vigorous life. Moreover, the efforts of many writers, culminating in "The English Dialect Dictionary," lately finished at Oxford, have accumulated so vast a store of material as to make it, at first sight, appear hopeless to hunt for game in this field. When you think that you have found some choice specimen—some word which, perhaps, was common in King Alfred's time, but is unknown in the literature of the last ten centuries—you will nearly always find that somebody has forestalled you, and that it is already in the Dictionary. But if you go to the right places you will still find something worth having. In order to succeed

you will have to stay in the same neighbourhood for weeks or months together, and to keep your ears open and your mind on the subject. One can hardly pick up old words in travelling about, or in casual visits lasting a day or two. The late Mr. Thomas Hallam, of Manchester, a prominent member of the English Dialect Society, used to spend odd days in the High Peak of Derbyshire and then go back to Manchester rejoicing in a capture or two that he had made. But if you want to make progress as a collector it is necessary that you should do more than this. You must become familiar with the people who use dialectal or obsolete words. As you know, it is useless to ask them bluntly if they have heard this or that curiosity of language. And if at first you chance to hear a word which is new to you, it is useless, also, to ask the speaker to repeat it. He will not do so, and if you repeat it yourself, and ask him to tell you what it means, he will probably say that he has never heard it. But it is possible in the course of a few weeks to become so familiar with the workpeople of a district that they will tell you anything, except perhaps their most cherished superstitions. The first thing to be done, then, is to establish confidence between yourself and the inhabitants of your chosen district. Of course the ideal way of collecting would be to take everything down with a phonograph, and then pick out the sentences containing dialect words at leisure. But, for obvious reasons, this could seldom be done. I have got some of my best words in hayfields where men are working and talking together without restraint.

During the last four years I have spent several months in the summer at a place called Little Hucklow in the High Peak. It is a small and now decayed, hamlet where lead-mining was once carried on, and where mining terms may still be picked up. It lies away from the main roads, and forms a part of the district called Peak Forest. It stands 1000 feet above the level of the sea, and some of the farns are much higher. We are never troubled by tourists or motor-cars, and a cyclist rarely

gets near us. There are at least two old people who have never travelled by railway, or been to Sheffield, which is the nearest big town, and is about seventeen miles off. If, in such a place, there are few of the amenities of life, there are at least some curiosities. And here, as in many of the wilder and remoter parts of England, old words and customs linger, or are remembered.

During the present summer I have not paid much attention to dialect, and have only noticed four words at Little Hucklow. One of these is *coram*, which is used in the phrase "out of coram," out of order, or "not in coram," not in order. This word is the Latin preposition which means "before," or "in the presence of." It is not in the English Dialect Dictionary, and the New English Dictionary only knows it in the phrases "to bring under coram," or "to call to coram," to call to account, to bring to book. But no recent quotations of the phrase are given, the latest being of the year 1611. Another word is *flewce*, meaning a slice, as "we don't eat the hard part of a horse-mushroom; we cut a flewce off." The word occurs in the Dialect Dictionary as *fleece*, meaning a layer of hay in a stack. A gentleman who comes from the East Riding of Yorkshire tells me that he knows the word as *flewce*. Another word is *burn*, a load, as "a burn of corn." This is merely a contracted form of *burden*, and is pretty well known. It is interesting to note that in this part of Derbyshire a *burn-can* was a vessel in which water was carried on the head, the carrier's pate being protected by a roll of old stockings made into a sort of crown, and hung up in the cottage. The fourth word which I got this summer was *pinch*, a short, steep hill. Thus, in describing the way to a place, I heard a man say that the road was good "except that bit of a pinch up to Gatley." The speaker was a Derbyshire man who had never left the district, and whose forefathers had long lived there. The English Dialect Dictionary is only able to give one instance from Dorsetshire, and another from Ireland. Yet here we have the word in a very

distant place, and one can hardly doubt that it has borne its present meaning for a very long time.

You will find in Professor Wright's Dictionary the word *bed-churn*, a term applied to the person who remains longest in bed on the morning of Shrove Tuesday. The boy who came last to school was tied to a form, and ducked in a pond. This Derbyshire word was taken from my "Glossary," and no other example of it is given. Last year I asked a farmer at Little Hucklow if he knew what a *bed-churn* was. He said "You mean *bed-churl*, don't you?" He then told me about the custom. To avoid being made *bed-churl* people have been known to stay up all night. It was also usual to sweep the *bed-churl* out of bed with a broom. The lead-miner who came last to his work on the morning of Shrove Tuesday had a stake put under his legs, and he was "tipped down th'hillock." I think the form *bed-churl* is right, though in other parts of Derbyshire I have always heard *bed-churn*. In either case the word, like the custom, must be very old. We are here led into the subject of folklore. Why should people rise early on Shrove Tuesday? And why was the *bed-churl* ill used? It may be possible to answer these questions, but the subject lies outside our present enquiry.

Another word frequently heard at Little Hucklow is *to cuck*, or *cuck up*. In various parts of England there is, or was, a custom of lifting or heaving people on Easter Monday. This is known at Little Hucklow and other villages in the neighbourhood as *cucking*, though the custom is now very little observed. The men *cucked* the women on Easter Monday, and the women *cucked* the men on Easter Tuesday. On one occasion there was a girl at Bradwell called Sally Greaves who said that she "was one of the better sort," and refused to be *cucked*. We have here, I think, the explanation of the term *cucking-stool*, which means a lifting-stool, or a stool at the end of a pole in which scolding women were lifted and then ducked in a pond.

Another interesting word which I have lately investigated

at Little Hucklow is *bing*. A *bing* is a small semi-circular building projecting from the side or end of a lead-miner's *house* or *coe*. In shape it resembles the rounded apse at the east end of some old churches. To define the word briefly one might say that a *bing* is an apse. Now this is a word on which the Dictionaries have no information. The New English Dictionary gives *bing* in the sense of a heap or pile, and also as the equivalent of *bin* in various applications. A *bing* in Derbyshire is used as a store-house for the finer pieces of lead. Glossaries of architectural terms should contain this word.

No words are more valuable than the technical terms of agriculture and of various trades. Many old words linger amongst the iron and steel trades of Sheffield, and I fear that they have not all been collected. I have friends in Sheffield who now and then send me postcards mentioning words which they have heard their workmen use. In the English Dialect Dictionary you will find the word *shemming* defined as "the mark left upon the imperfect adhesion of two pieces of iron when welded together." This was one of the words supplied by me. I am told now that the *shemming-end* is the tail end of a weld. When two pieces of iron are welded together imperfect union often takes place. The end of the piece which has been hammered into the other piece is exposed to view, and a small hole or cavity is left. In this connection one cannot help thinking of the word *sham*, which may originally have denoted an imperfect piece of work.

In Sheffield a channel for water is a *groove*, not a *gutter*, as in the Dictionaries, though *groove* is perhaps the older and better term. In a knife grinder's trough, or trough in which the wheel revolves, there is a horizontal piece of metal known as a *gate*. The *gate* supports the piece of wood in which the end of the axle runs. You may hear a man say "I know how to put on a *gate*," and I know how to put on a *gate*. A *gate*, by the way, is a piece of wood nailed to the drum to prevent the grinder's driving belt when thrown off the drum

from falling into the space or hollow in which the drum works. I do not find *gain* in the English Dialect Dictionary, but a *gain-block*, according to that authority, is "a large block of wood with a cleft in it used in working timber with an axe." The hollow between the teeth of a file or a saw is known as a *gullet*; a file used for making the *gullets* of saws is known as a *gulleting-file*. When a rod of steel is split longitudinally it is said to be *throated*. A *skeath* is a revolving coulter fitted into a plough-beam. A *scarf* is a piece of iron that overlaps. A singular phrase which I have heard in Sheffield several times is "as mean as *tongs*." Nobody can tell me what it means, except that it describes a greedy or avaricious person. Another phrase for an avaricious man is *nip-sig*, and the Rev. Arthur B. Browne has drawn my attention to the East Yorkshire *nip-corran*, said of an old woman called Nancy Nipcorran who, to make an exact balance in the scales, would *nip* a currant and put one half in the customers' portion and the other back in the jar. He regards these words as variations of Aristotle's *cummin-splitter*. A lump of iron that will not melt in the furnace is called, I believe, a *skull*.

The collector will find verses and proverbial sayings which are well worth preserving. Thus at Bradwell in Derbyshire they have this proverb :—

If Candlemas Day be summerly gay,
We shall have winter till th' Calends of May;
If Candlemas Day be wet and foul,
The half of winter is done at Yule.

You may have heard these lines in other forms : I doubt whether they have been published in so old a form as this. In the first place the adjective *summerly*, which is the Middle English *sumerlich*, is remarkable. Then you have the Calends mentioned in a popular saying. Lastly *foul* rimes with *Yule*.

There is no more beautiful and pathetic word in the English language than the pronoun *ours* which mothers use to describe

their husbands and the fathers of their children. But you will only find it in the dialects, usually pronounced like *ahrs*. When you hear a woman say "*Ahrs* is no scholard; he can't read a line o't paper," you may be inclined to laugh. But when you consider that this little word denotes, as no other word could do, that sacred family union on which society is built, you may regard it seriously.

And this brings me to another point in our English dialects—I mean the extreme conciseness of the popular speech. I have often said to myself, after listening to a conversation in a farmhouse, "Oh if I could write or talk as well as that!" Not a word, not a syllable, is wasted. The speakers go right to the point, and often say in five words what a literary man does not say in twenty. I have now and then succeeded in remembering neat and pithy sayings, but have found it impossible to write down a whole conversation. And yet that is the ideal at which authors of books which purport to be written in dialects ought to aim. There is hardly one good book written in a local dialect. Nor can this be wondered at. It is very difficult to reproduce it, for in the case of men who read and write much the memory becomes weakened. I find myself that I can trust so little to memory that I cannot remember words, much less long sentences, unless I write them down immediately. Novelists rarely succeed in reproducing dialect because they trust too much to memory, and because, like other writers, they often try to reproduce it by the misspelling of words. Mr. Thomas Hardy has, I think, been very successful, not because he gives us many dialect words, but because he makes his Dorsetshire peasants speak in such a way that one feels that his pictures are drawn from life. Amongst Yorkshire authors Emily Brontë has some fine touches of dialect in "*Wuthering Heights*." The other day a Derbyshire man was describing a cold winter to me when he said: "It were eight weeks and niver a *melch* day; th' pot boiled on th' fire while th' watter froze on th' table." A day is *melch* when it is beginning to

thaw ; weather is either frosty or *melch*. The word does not, as some Dictionaries have told us, mean simply mild.

Again, what pretty images are suggested by some dialect words ! When the largest daisy or chrysanthemum is called a *moonpenny*, do we not think of moons and pennies ? And is not that a better name than *marguerite*, which means a pearl ? In Derbyshire we have also a *horse-penny*, not in the Dictionaries, which is otherwise known as yellow rattle or penny-grass.

It is strange to hear the word *man* or *mun* applied to a woman, as we sometimes do in Yorkshire. " War, mun, tha moan't doa soa " was a caution addressed to a woman in my hearing. But what seems strange to those who are only acquainted with modern English may be very good obsolete English. We have to consider that the Old Norse *man* meant a girl or maid as well as a bondman, and that the Old English *mann* meant a human being.

When a man has once become known as a collector of dialect, friends and acquaintances will send him things which they hear. But it is a bad plan to publish without verification, though most of the words will turn out to be right. Thus I am told that at Bridlington a boy who will not go under water when he is bathing is called a *curry-miser*. I am also told that Yorkshire colliers speak of the props which hold up the roof of the mine as *cockermegs*. Of these words I have no verification, though I feel sure that they are right.

At Wakefield the word *dozzie* is used in the sense of darling, love. This is not in the English Dialect Dictionary, which only has *dossie*, a slovenly woman. Another word not in the Dictionary is *doit*, a finger, as " If you haven't a knife and fork use your doits." I have heard this at Handsworth Woodhouse on the east side of Sheffield. It is, of course, the French *doigt*, Latin *digitus*. You have perhaps not heard of *dannikins*—a term by which the modern " spree " is expressed. It is, however, used in the Holmfirth district, as " Where's Bill and Tom ? 'They're gone on't dannikins."

Old pronunciations remain long in rural districts. Thus at Little Hucklow *damask* is called *damásk*, the accent falling on the last syllable, as it did when the word was first used in England.

The adjective *green* is used in South Yorkshire in the sense of new, fresh. We have all heard of a *green* cheese, otherwise a fresh cheese. But it is strange to hear of the *green roof* of a coal-mine, which is far from being like the colour of growing plants. So, in railway work, a *green road* is a fresh or newly-made road, the road being here the track or permanent way. Now one meets here and there with a country lane called Green Lane; for instance there has long been a Green Lane in Sheffield. There is also a Green Lane in Dronfield—six miles off. Naturally when we hear this name we think of a lane which in summer was shaded by leaves, and perhaps a delightful picture is formed in our minds. It may be a true picture, but it is quite possible that a *green lane* is a new lane.

From the correspondence which reaches me I know that in many parts of England the word *home* means simply household furniture. Thus, in seeking advice, a man may say, "My mother left her home to her two daughters, and it was valued at £20." If you ask whether *home* means a house, or a house and land, you will be told that it means nothing of the sort; it means the goods and chattels which a poor man or woman has been able to get together. You will find it everywhere in Yorkshire.

I had often heard, as you have, of *striking a bargain*, but did not know until the other day that bargains are actually struck not in metaphor, or according to a form of speech, but by manual force! At Little Hucklow to *knock it off* is to conclude a bargain, and that is done by the help of a *striking-piece*. The seller puts an old penny or a pocket-knife into the buyer's hand and says "knock it off, man." Then the buyer strikes the seller's hand and knocks off the penny or knife, and the bargain is made. The object of the ceremony is to bring luck

to the buyer, and we have an allusion to the practice in "Hudibras" (II. i. 50):—

You see what bangs it has endur'd
That would, before new feats, be cur'd;
But if that's all you stand upon,
Here, strike me luck, it shall be done.

In words and phrases like these we see that the collection of dialect leads us into folklore, as well as into important questions of philology. The custom of using a knife in making bargains is very old. We find it in German documents of an early date. In the "Pontefract Chartulury," published by the Yorkshire Archæological Society, we read of land being granted on the altar by means of a clasped knife (ii. 433), and, in another charter in the same book, land is said to have been conveyed on the altar by means of a twig or rod (ii. 428). Now the stick or twig is familiar to some of us in the present day—I mean those who have had to do with the sale of copyhold land. I think I have read of cases where knives have actually been fastened to charters. So much for the antiquity of the custom.

I will not attempt to discuss that attitude of the human mind which saw a religious necessity for such observances. But there is another point to which I would draw your attention. What is a *bargain*? If you turn to the Dictionaries you will find that the origin of the word is uncertain. When we look into the custom of *striking* a bargain it seems as if the bargain itself were some material object, such as a piece of wood put into the buyer's hand, just as the steward of the copyhold manor puts a rod into the hands of a purchaser. Now a Latin-English Vocabulary of the fifteenth century renders the word *bargayne* by *palmitum*, and this Latin word is explained in a gloss of the eleventh century as a branch or bough, and it is also explained as the twig of a vine. Further, there is a late Latin word *bargus*, which means the branch of

a tree, though I am bound to say that it was used for a branch on which people were hanged !

I am sure that the members of your Society, which has done me the honour to invite me to address you, are agreed that the collection of dialect may be still carried on successfully and usefully. It is not certain that all the Yorkshire dales have yet been scoured, though much good work has been done. And there are districts which have been little worked. I might mention, for instance, Nottinghamshire, and the east and south of Derbyshire.





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